Portland Community College

Portland Community College (PCC) is the largest institution of higher education in Oregon. Serving the Portland area since 1961 as an adult education extension of Portland Public Schools, PCC's service area and offerings expanded over the next ten years to become a full-service community college in 1971. In 2008-2009, PCC provided academic services to more than 87,000 students on three comprehensive campuses as well as in numerous centers and workforce training sites in the Portland metropolitan area. The college serves Multnomah and Washington counties and parts of Clackamas, Columbia, and Yamhill counties.

Sylvania, the original campus, is located in southwest Portland and houses the office of the college's president. Cascade campus in northeast Portland opened in 1971, followed in 1976, against fierce political resistance, by Rock Creek campus in the Hillsboro area. Amo DeBernardis, founding president of PCC (1961-1979), was largely responsible for the growth of the college. In 2008, PCC passed a $387 million bond—the largest education bond measure passed in Oregon's history—to help update technology and expand classroom space across its district.

With a service area of over 1,500 square miles, including metropolitan, suburban, and rural areas, PCC serves a diverse and growing region. Each campus offers technical training programs, certificates, and degrees, as well as transfer programs for students who want to attend four-year colleges and universities.

Cascade campus is located in the heart of northeast Portland. The campus serves its community as well as the entire college district by offering such programs as ophthalmic medicine and professional music. Cascade campus is also home to the Portland Teachers Program (PTP), a collaborative effort among PCC, Portland State University, University of Portland, Beaverton School District, and Portland Public Schools.

PTP began in 1989 and is nationally recognized in its work to recruit and prepare culturally competent teachers, especially those historically underrepresented in the teaching profession. By providing scholarship and support services to students in the program, the PTP produces teachers and future administrators who can integrate their cultural heritage and that of others into their teaching, serve as role models for their students, and work to close the achievement gap for children from diverse backgrounds.

The rural setting of the Rock Creek campus is ideal for its veterinary and landscape programs and provides space for a fully functioning farm. Its partnership with nearby Hillsboro Aviation gives student pilots access to Federal Aviation Administration-certified flight schools.

Serving the suburban area of southwest Portland, the Sylvania campus is not only the oldest but also the largest of the PCC campuses, serving over 26,000 students a year. In addition to college transfer courses, Sylvania is home to the district's nursing and dental programs, both of which have earned national recognition for excellence.

Training in health-related areas also occurs at the Central Workforce Training Center (CWTC) in southeast Portland. CWTC houses the Institute for Health Professionals, which provides training and re-training in a variety of health fields. This site offers healthcare professional development as well as chemotherapy and biotherapy, forensic nursing, and nutritional therapy.

Originally a small site serving southeast Portland, the Southeast Center has grown since 1981 to a 94,000-square-foot center that offers transfer courses, workforce training, and adult basic education. It also houses Gateway to College (GTC), a nationally replicated program that allows at-risk high school students to meet graduation requirements while earning college credits. GTC began through a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Since its beginnings in 2000, the program has received over $13 million in grants from the Gates Foundation and has been replicated at twenty-four colleges in fourteen states.

The diversity of PCC's service area is reflected in its students, faculty, and staff. Each campus offers cultural events relevant to the local community and serves students from diverse backgrounds. In 2007, PCC earned the National Equity Award from the Association of Community College Trustees. This award recognized PCC's efforts to hire a diverse workforce and to provide educational opportunities to women and minorities. Increasing diversity is one of institution's primary goals and a key area of its strategic plan.

Written by Joan Jagodnik

Further Reading:

Portland Community College. "Class Locations: Campuses and Centers." http://www.pcc.edu/location/.

Portland Community College. "College History." Portland Community College. http://www.pcc.edu/about/quick-facts/history.html.

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